

C. APPLICANT'S COMMENTS

Claims 1-16 are pending in this Application, with Claim 1 being amended, Claims 20-35 being added, Claim 17 being canceled and Claims 18, 19 being withdrawn. No new matter is added by way of these amendments, and the amendments are supported throughout the Specification and the drawings. Reconsideration of Claims 1-16 and favorable consideration of Claims 20-35 is respectfully requested. The Examiner's rejections will be considered in the order of their occurrence in the Official Action.

Pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Official Action, the features of Claim 17 have been incorporated into independent Claim 1. The Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 1 along with dependent Claims 2-15 are in condition for allowance pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Official Action. The Applicant has added independent Claim 20 which is mainly comprised of as-filed Claims 1 and 3 along with dependent Claims 21-35. The Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 20 along with dependent Claims 21-35 are in condition for allowance pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Official Action.

The Applicant also respectfully submits that Leicht does not qualify as appropriate prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as Leicht, Inaba and Havey do not disclose (expressly or inherently) all of the features of independent Claims 1, 20. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claims 1, 20 are patentable over the cited reference for at least these reasons. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the outstanding rejection as applied to independent Claim 1 (and potentially to independent Claim 20), since the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, dependent Claims 2-16, 21-35 which depend there from are also in condition for allowance.

D. CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, early reconsideration and allowance of this application are most courteously solicited. Should the Examiner consider necessary or desirable any formal changes anywhere in the specification, claims and/or drawing, then it is

respectfully asked that such changes be made by Examiner's Amendment, if the Examiner feels this would facilitate passage of the case to issuance. Alternatively should the Examiner feel that a personal discussion might be helpful in advancing this case to allowance, they are invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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February 18, 2005

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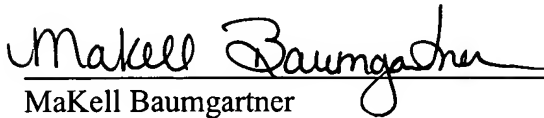
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On February 18, 2005.


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